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mineral matter. Moreover, although it is relatively easy to distinguish between CO_2 and H_2O on the one hand as inorganic "food materials," and sugars, starches, etc., on the other hand as manufactured "foods," who can say when nitrogen, sulphur and phosphorus cease to be "food materials" and become "foods"? Is it not more than probable, also, that some constituents of the mineral material taken in by plants and animals are immediately available for assimilation in the form absorbed, and are thus foods in both the restricted and broader senses of the word? If the facts are as here suggested, it is clearly impossible to limit the term food to organic material, first because too little is known of the metabolic processes by which nitrogen, sulphur, phosphorus, et al., are assimilated to enable any one to say at what stage these elements cease to be parts of inorganic and become parts of organic compounds, and second, because some inorganic substances are probably *foods* in both senses of the word.

In conclusion, the question asked in the title may be repeated. How is the word food to be defined? Is it to be limited to organic substances with all the pedagogic and scientific difficulties which such limitation entails? Or shall it remain as at present, raising no practical difficulties whatever and leaving the academic difficulties involved to be dealt with when the pupil becomes sufficiently mature to understand them? **RALPH C. BENEDICT**

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A STANDARD FORM OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

DISTANCES in the United States are so great that it is often impossible for a committee to hold a meeting, and its work must be done by correspondence. Owing to the international, or national, character of many committees, and the increasing amount of friendly cooperation among scientific men, some standard system of arriving at results is greatly needed. It would then only be necessary when appointing a committee to state that its work would be done in this way, and the chairman would be saved the necessity of devising a method in

each case, and the doubt in many cases, whether he was justified in appending the names of all members to his report.

The following method is accordingly suggested: The chairman or secretary should have three letters manifolded, and sent in due course to each member of the committee. The first of these should state the exact terms of the appointment; the objects desired; a request for suggestions for the report; an opinion whether a meeting is advisable, and if so, when and where.

The second letter should contain a preliminary report embodying the suggestions received, and in cases of doubt asking numbered questions to which, if possible, the answer will be yes, doubtful, disapprove, or no. In the first three cases, the writer accepts the views of the majority of the committee. In all four cases, he authorizes his name to be attached to the report, provided that it contains a statement that he dissents from the questions to which his reply is no. Prompt answers are requested, but if any member fails to reply after a letter has been in his hands for a week, the chairman may assume that he assents.

The third letter should contain the proposed report, to which all the names would be attached unless answers were received expressing dissent. Some of the members might prefer to make a minority report. If no reply was received to letters one and two, letter three should be registered with a request for a receipt, as otherwise the previous letters might not have been received. If haste is important, night letters are generally to be preferred to telegrams, since the delay from the most distant points of the country would seldom exceed twenty-four hours. If a reply by cable is necessary, the chairman should give his cable address, and if possible arrange all his questions so that each answer shall consist of only one or two words. A reply by cable, in which the fifth question related to a place of meeting, might read: Fieldsmith, Washington. One, two, yes; three, no; four, doubtful; five, London, July. Brown.

EDWARD C. PICKERING

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